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The September/October Bulletin is now available and can be read online [here](#).

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If there are any stories you'd like featured in next month's issue or important news you'd like to share, please feel free to contact

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2015

Intergovernmental Meeting

November 18-20

New Orleans, LA

Email: ivana@energyca.org
for more information

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Cantwell questions DOE nominees about Hanford waste disposal

Tri-City Herald

October 20, 2015

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Work at the Hanford vitrification plant needs to move forward on a path that is certain, Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., said at a confirmation hearing Tuesday for three proposed Department of Energy officials.

She sees ideas proposed at Hanford only to have new officials come to the realization that they will not work after large amounts of money have been spent, she said at the hearing of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. She is the ranking member of the committee.

“We do have leaky tanks and we need to get them cleaned up,” Cantwell said.

Much of the 56 million gallons of radioactive waste stored in underground tanks is waiting for treatment at the Hanford vitrification plant, which is years away from the start of even limited operation.

Treating waste for disposal is important, said Victoria Baecher Wassmer, nominated as the DOE undersecretary for management and performance.

She has had high-level briefings and will be learning more details on the proposed phased approach to the start of vitrification plant operations. Treating some of the Hanford waste storage tank’s low-activity radioactive waste for disposal while technical issues are addressed related to high-level radioactive waste has been proposed.

Some forms of nuclear defense waste do not yet have viable disposition paths, Cantwell said.

Cherry Murray, nominated to be the director of the DOE Office of Science, serves on the Congressional Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Energy Laboratories. The commission has noted that with the high cost of DOE environmental cleanup, more science is needed, Murray told

Cantwell.

“Science really is the underpinning of every technology,” Murray said.

The third DOE nominee at the hearing was John Kotek, formerly the staff director to the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future. He is nominated to be the DOE assistant secretary for nuclear energy.

Kotek said that DOE is in the process of developing a plan for a separate national repository for high-level radioactive defense waste, such as that at Hanford, rather than disposing of it with used commercial nuclear power plant fuel as had previously been mandated. The federal government has said that because some defense waste is less radioactive and easier to handle, a simpler design might work for a defense repository.

Kotek also discussed plans to find communities willing to play host to repositories for disposal of nuclear waste.

“The administration is committed to a consent-based siting process that involves working with states, tribes, local governments, in a way that leads to signing agreements with what we would call a willing and informed host community for those facilities,” he said.

Parties considering playing host to disposal sites want to be sure it can be done in a way that is fully protective of the environment, he said. They should also feel better off for taking on the challenge.

“It will be incumbent on us to provide information, technical resources and other assets to them as they work through answering those types of questions,” he said.

Cantwell said the three DOE nominees are well-qualified and should be confirmed.

DOE starts planning for new Hanford contracts

Tri-City Herald

October 16, 2015

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The Department of Energy has taken the first step toward awarding new contracts for large scopes of work at the Hanford nuclear reservation.

It has issued a request for information from companies interested in environmental cleanup and support services after September 2018. The work is managed by the DOE Richland Operations Office, which typically has an annual budget approaching \$1 billion.

The contract held by CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co., which is responsible for much of central Hanford and groundwater cleanup, expires in September 2018.

The contract for Washington Closure Hanford, which is responsible for cleanup along the Columbia River, has been extended through September 2016. Most of the cleanup along the river will be completed then, but some continuing work on complex or difficult projects will need to be assigned to another contractor.

The third large contract awarded by the Richland Operations Office, held by Mission Support Alliance, expires in September 2019. It covers sitewide services, including information technology, utilities, security, fire protection, management of the HAMMER training center, road maintenance, preservation of cultural artifacts and portfolio management for DOE, including providing data to help DOE plan for and meet deadlines.

As contract expiration dates approach, DOE wants feedback from companies interested in the work on innovative approaches to work and potential contracting goals, according to DOE's request for information.

Key decisions on the new contracts have yet to be made. DOE has not decided the number of contracts, types of contracts, dates of work or whether some will be reserved for small businesses. It has asked for proposals from interested companies on how they would like those matters handled.

The request for information also does not cover the possible cost of projects, but asks interested companies to provide information on how they would deal with funding that could vary by budget year.

The request for information does not include work at the Hanford tank farms, where Washington River Protection Solutions manages 56 million gallons of high level radioactive waste held in underground tanks. The tank farms contract falls under a different office, the DOE Office of River Protection.

It also will expire in a few years. The Washington River Protection

Solutions contract is good through September 2016, and DOE has the option to extend it through September 2018.

The major work that could be included in one or more new cleanup contracts under the Richland Operations Office includes transferring the K Basin sludge to central Hanford and treating it, establishing infrastructure to support vitrification plant operations, completing transfer of strontium and cesium capsules to dry storage and retrieving temporarily buried waste and preparing it for shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. Groundwater cleanup and protection would continue.

Additional central Hanford work could include preparation to demolish Hanford's huge processing buildings and tearing down contaminated central Hanford buildings and digging up contaminated waste sites there.

Additional work along the Columbia River could include completing cleanup at the 324 Building, which sits over a highly radioactive spill; digging up the 618-11 Burial Ground near Energy Northwest's nuclear power plant on leased Hanford land and cocooning the K Reactors, a process that puts them into long-term storage.

DOE plans separate Hanford site tours on Nov. 17 for companies interested in the Richland Operations Office cleanup projects and the Hanford-wide infrastructure and services. Individual meetings will be scheduled Nov. 18 to 20. Sign up information is posted at 1.usa.gov/1NgIBv4.

Need to fill 37,000 jobs reinforced by SRS Community Reuse Organization

Aiken Standard

October 16, 2015

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NORTH AUGUSTA — A local organization reiterated its findings that there will be 37,000 job openings in a nine-county region from 2014 to 2019.

Many of the employment opportunities are nuclear-related jobs at the Savannah River Site, according to the SRS Community Reuse Organization, or SRSCRO.

The organization first released the information in April. During a North Augusta A.M. Connections Breakfast, SRSCRO member

Mindy Mets told the chamber about the variety of job openings the areas can expect.

According to studies commissioned by the organization, 80 percent of the job openings will be replacement jobs due to retirement and attrition.

Specifically, it examined the workforce trends in a five-county service area: Aiken, Allendale and Barnwell counties in South Carolina, and Richmond and Columbia counties in Georgia.

Collected data shows that more than 50,000 workers commute into the five-county region for work each day. The region – combined with the commuter counties of McDuffie, Richmond and Burke counties in Georgia and South Carolina’s Edgefield County – creates a nine-county region that employs 400,000 people.

Specifically at SRS, Metts said about 50 percent of the workforce will be eligible for retirement over the next five years.

“That’s a lot of turnover, which means good, well-paying jobs will be available for our young people. We need them to be aware of the opportunities right here in their backyard,” Metts said.

The realization leaves the window open for younger employees, but there is a growing concern that students are not interested in nuclear, engineering, computer science, health science and other related areas.

To help students learn more about the opportunities, the SRSCRO has worked hand-in-hand with Aiken Technical College. Dr. Susan Winsor has a vested interest in the topic as president of Aiken Tech and chairwoman of the SRSCRO.

Winsor said millions of dollars in federal grants, state funds and private donations have gone toward funding a push to teach more about nuclear and make those teaching interactive.

The organization’s goal will be creating a more demand-driven workforce that supports recruitment and retention. That mission can be met through collecting information, holding workforce summits, connecting partners to students and job seekers and creating a marketplace that attracts younger workers, group members said.

For example, Winsor referenced Aiken Tech’s welding program

and spoke about the need for quality welders and related jobs that may interest students.

“The goal is to improve our workforce pool across our region,” Winsor said.

NUCLEAR POLICY:DOE team crafting strategy for moving, storing reactor waste

E&E News/Greenwire

October 20, 2015

[LINK](#)

The Obama administration is preparing plans for transporting used reactor fuel to temporary storage sites and creating a federal corporation to oversee the process, according to sources and documents obtained by Greenwire.

The Department of Energy has assembled a team of a dozen or so staffers to "lay the groundwork" for transporting spent reactor fuel from closed nuclear power plants to not-yet-identified interim storage sites, team leaders said in a Sept. 2 presentation to the Office of Nuclear Energy.

The goal is to build a "foundation" for the organization that would oversee waste disposal, documents say.

The administration launched the "Nuclear Fuel Storage and Transportation Planning Project" three years ago under a strategy to build a pilot interim storage site by 2021, a larger interim site by 2025 and a new geologic repository by 2048.

The Sept. 2 presentation provides a new window into those plans.

Andrew Griffith, DOE's associate deputy assistant secretary for fuel cycle technologies in the Office of Nuclear Energy, will lead the effort. He'll report to John Kotek, the acting assistant secretary of nuclear energy, who's being vetted today by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for the full-time appointment (E&E Daily, Oct. 19).

Other key team members: Mark Nutt, a nuclear engineer at Argonne National Laboratory; Rob Howard, a senior project engineer at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory; and Melissa Bates, a DOE engineer who works on nuclear fuels and transportation.

In the near term, the group has been tasked with developing options for interim storage, establishing a database to characterize material that would go into the new waste management system, finding ways for the public to comment on storage and transportation options, and preparing for a pilot interim waste-storage facility.

DOE lists 13 closed nuclear plants where almost 18,000 used nuclear fuel assemblies are being held in dry storage casks -- large concrete vessels -- waiting for final disposal.

The department has expressed interest in moving forward with interim storage as a way to stave off costly lawsuits DOE faces for failing to uphold 1980s agreements to take possession of waste piling up at reactors across the country. Damages could be more than \$20 billion by 2020 and up to \$500 million annually after 2020, according to the Nuclear Energy Institute.

There have been rumors about the DOE team and the administration's focus on finding temporary solutions for the country's 70,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel circulating among industry officials for several weeks.

One industry source praised DOE for its effort to find storage options for reactor fuel after disassembling the Yucca Mountain, Nev., repository program five years ago.

"Since 2010, the department hasn't done a great deal on the back end of the fuel cycle, when Yucca was halted," the source said. "This is finally seeing some action on their part to move forward. While not with Yucca Mountain, which the industry, of course, would like ... they're beginning to plan and think about consolidated storage."

The presentation raises the question of whether DOE is considering proposals for interim storage in Texas and New Mexico, the source said.

Waste Control Specialists, a Dallas-based company whose former owner, billionaire Harold Simmons, once dubbed President Obama the most "dangerous man in America," unveiled plans earlier this year to build the nation's first private, temporary storage site for spent reactor fuel in arid West Texas.

And in New Mexico, Holtec International Inc. has proposed an underground storage facility to store casks of used fuel.

But the industry source also made clear Yucca Mountain must be part of the DOE package.

"The two -- consolidated storage and Yucca -- they can go forward together. And if they go forward, they need to do so together," the source said. "Consolidated storage is not a solution in itself. You need the repository, but the repository isn't going to be open for a couple decades at least."

Legal authority

As DOE inches toward resolving the country's waste issues, it faces constraints.

DOE has been warned by government watchdogs that it lacks clear legislative authority for consolidated interim storage or permanent disposal at a site other than Yucca Mountain. Nor can the department transport spent reactor fuel to temporary sites, the Government Accountability Office has said.

GAO also found the department would need to buy new equipment and fund costly upgrades if it were to pursue moving nuclear waste by rail.

"The federal government's ability to site, license, construct and operate a consolidated interim storage facility not tied to Yucca Mountain depends on new legislative authority," according to a GAO report to a House subcommittee.

A Republican congressional aide agreed DOE faces constraints under the 1982 Nuclear Waste Policy Act, and the department's activities on interim storage could trigger concern on the Hill as GOP lawmakers and the Nuclear Energy Institute have called for a federal thumbs-up or -down on Yucca Mountain before any other option is pursued.

"I think there would be concern about how far and what exactly they're trying to do that goes beyond the limits of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act," the aide said. "It's important DOE maintain a semblance of activity on the used fuel management program, but there are limits to how much generic work can be done in this space until you actually start. Whether it's interim or whether they want to move toward a repository, they need to have legal authority to do that."

But DOE is aiming to align its activities with the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future, a presidential panel that called on Congress three years ago to develop nuclear storage sites and dumps.

The commission also warned that narrowly focusing on the development of Yucca Mountain would exacerbate a policy impasse that has stranded nuclear waste across the country (Greenwire, Feb. 1, 2012).

A DOE spokesman said the team is part of a strategy the department unveiled in March for tackling defense and commercial nuclear waste separately (E&ENews PM, March 24).

"Based on this announcement a team has been developing plans and performing technical analysis of various components of an integrated waste management system, as well as evaluating the Department's next steps in the consent-based siting process," Bartlett Jackson said in an email.

"The Department believes that siting of any facility for storage or disposal of nuclear waste should be done in a consent-based fashion consistent with the phased, adaptive, and consent-based approach that has been endorsed by the National Academies and the [Blue Ribbon Commission] and is an essential element of the administration's Strategy for the Management and Disposal of Used Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste."

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